AMENDMENT OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-7. (Canceled)

Claim 8 (New). An impeller arranged for placement in a rotary slicing machine, comprising:

a substantially circular base plate having an axis of rotation;

at least one ring having an axis generally parallel with the axis of rotation of the base plate;

a plurality of paddles extending between opposed radial surfaces of the base plate and the at least one ring in a circumferentially spaced relationship relative to the base plate;

each of the paddles extending at an identical and constant angle relative to the axis of rotation of the base plate, a trailing edge of each paddle being located adjacent the base plate in a trailing relationship relative to a leading edge of the paddle located adjacent to the at least one ring in an intended direction of rotation of the base plate;

each of the paddles oriented to extend at an angle relative to a radius of the base plate and the at least one ring, an inner edge of each paddle extending between the base plate and the at least one ring being located in a leading relationship relative to an outer edge extending between the base plate and the at least one ring of the paddle, the inner edge of each paddle defining a first corner with the leading edge and a second corner with the trailing edge of the paddle;

wherein a first radial distance is defined between the first corner and the axis of rotation of the base plate and a second radial distance is defined between the second corner and the axis of rotation of the base plate, the first radial distance being greater than the second radial distance.

Claim 9. (New). The impeller according to claim 8, wherein the trailing and leading edges of the paddles are generally parallel to one another.

Claim 10. (New). The impeller according to claim 8, wherein the inner and outer edges of the paddles are generally parallel to one another.

Claim 11. (New) The impeller according to claim 8, wherein the inner and outer edges intersect the leading and trailing edges of each paddle at an oblique angle.

Claim 12. (New) The impeller according to claim 8, wherein the outer edge of each paddle is oriented generally tangential to the periphery of the base plate and the at least one ring.

Claim 13. (New) A rotary food slicing machine, comprising:

a non-rotating annular drum housing having a cylindrical axis and at least one axially extending slot formed therein;

at least one knife mounted on the housing in a position lining one side of the slot; and

an impeller disposed within said drum, said impeller having an axis of rotation coincident with the cylindrical axis of the drum and rotatably driven about the axis of rotation of the drum, the impeller comprising a substantially circular base plate having an axis of rotation, at least one ring having an axis generally parallel with the axis of rotation of the base plate, and a plurality of paddles extending between opposed radial surfaces of the base plate and the at least one ring in a circumferentially spaced relationship relative to the base plate;

each of the paddles extending at an identical and constant angle relative to the axis of rotation of the base plate, a trailing edge of each paddle being located adjacent the base plate in a trailing relationship relative to a leading edge of the paddle located adjacent to the at least one ring in an intended direction of rotation of the base plate;

each of the paddles oriented to extend at an angle relative to a radius of the base plate and the at least one ring, an inner edge of each paddle extending between the base plate and the at least one ring being located in a leading relationship relative to an outer edge extending between the base plate and the at least one ring of the paddle, the inner edge of each paddle defining a first corner with the leading edge and a second corner with the trailing edge of the paddle;

wherein a first radial distance is defined between the first corner and the axis of rotation of the base plate and a second radial distance is defined between the second corner and the axis of rotation of the base plate, the first radial distance being greater than the second radial distance.

Claim 14. (New). The impeller according to claim 13, wherein the trailing and leading edges of the paddles are generally parallel to one another.

Claim 15. (New). The impeller according to claim 13, wherein the inner and outer edges of the paddles are generally parallel to one another.

Claim 16. (New) The impeller according to claim 13, wherein the inner and outer edges intersect the leading and trailing edges of each paddle at an oblique angle.

Claim 17. (New) The impeller according to claim 13, wherein the outer edge of each paddle is oriented generally tangential to the periphery of the base plate and the at least one ring.